The Cleveland Museum of Art

The Cleveland Museum of Art Announces Establishment of Center for Chinese Paintings Conservation

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Kelley Notaro Schreiber

The Cleveland Museum of Art
knotaro@clevelandart.org
216-707-6898

The June and Simon K.C. Li Center for Chinese Paintings Conservation becomes one of the premiere U.S. hubs for training and mentorship

Cleveland, OH (July 23, 2018) – The Cleveland Museum of Art (CMA) has collected exceptional Chinese paintings since its earliest days and has one of the most distinguished collections in the West. As responsible stewards of these important holdings, the museum has sought to increase the level of Chinese painting conservation expertise within the institution, and in turn throughout the United States. Today, the museum announces a transformative $1.5 million gift from June and Simon K.C. Li to establish a Center for Chinese Paintings Conservation. The Li gift matches a $1.5 million endowment challenge grant awarded by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

“Chinese paintings are a special strength of our collection,” said William Griswold, director of the Cleveland Museum of Art. “While these superb works occupy a critical place in Chinese art history, they also represent a major conservation challenge given the fragile nature of the materials used to create them. The shortage of qualified Chinese paintings conservators is a widespread dilemma faced by museums across the country. The generous gift by June and Simon K.C. Li and challenge grant from the Mellon Foundation will enable solutions that will effect great change in the industry and ensure the care of Chinese paintings for generations to come.”

“We are honored to participate in the creation of a Center for Chinese Painting Conservation at the Cleveland Museum of Art. The Center will not only preserve rare Chinese masterpieces in the Cleveland collection, it will also be an important resource for other American museums,” said June Li. “In addition, it will be a training center for future generations of Chinese painting conservators, ensuring that one of China’s greatest artistic traditions will endure.”

“The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation has been steadily working with the field to build and sustain a networked infrastructure to strengthen Chinese paintings conservation expertise across the United States. With this set of grants, the Cleveland Museum of Art establishes its role as a critical node in this professional network. We value and support the museum’s leadership in this important arena,” says Mariët Westermann, Mellon Foundation executive vice president for programs and research.

The CMA has been working toward a solution to the lack of Chinese painting conservation expertise in the United States since 2013. At that time, the museum was asked to join a conversation with the Freer and Sackler Galleries of the Smithsonian Institution and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. These two institutions partnered to initiate a training program aimed at advancing the conservation of Chinese paintings in the United States.

In 2014, the CMA hired a conservator trained by the Freer and Sackler Galleries and brought in senior- level conservators from such prestigious Chinese institutions as the Palace Museum, Beijing, and the Shanghai Museum for extended periods to provide mentorship. To maintain the level of training, the CMA sought a permanent funding solution and was awarded a $1.5 million Mellon Foundation challenge grant to create an endowment to fund the position of Conservator of Chinese Paintings and establish a training program in the field of Chinese paintings conservation.

The matching gift by June and Simon K.C. Li will allow the CMA to solidify its place as an institution with the expertise necessary to become a nexus for both the treatment of Chinese paintings and the training of qualified conservators. The CMA’s Li Center for Chinese Paintings Conservation will develop, educate and expose Chinese paintings conservators to knowledge and best practices. In addition, through the Li Center, the CMA will institute an annual endowed residency program for emerging Chinese paintings conservators. The participants will be given the opportunity to come to Cleveland to further their studies and work on the most magnificent and fragile artworks. This will ensure that the museum will have a skilled Chinese paintings conservator for its internationally renowned collection of Chinese paintings and establish the CMA as a consistent source of highly trained conservators in the United States.

“In addition to preserving our collection for generations to come, this will lay the foundation and secure the longevity of the field of conservation of Chinese paintings in the United States. This gift will have a far-reaching impact on the preservation and conservation of Chinese cultural property and we are beyond excited to embark on the establishment of a training center at the CMA,” said Per Knutås, the Eric and Jane Nord Chief Conservator of the Cleveland Museum of Art.

“The June and Simon K.C. Li Center for Chinese Paintings Conservation strengthens Cleveland’s ability to care for its remarkable and world-renowned holdings. It allows the museum not only to be an indispensable resource for scholarship, but also champions the highly sophisticated and specialized art and tradition of Chinese painting conservation,” said Clarissa von Spee, PhD, Chair of Asian Art and Curator of Chinese Art of the Cleveland Museum of Art.

With the establishment of the June and Simon K.C. Li Center for Chinese Painting Conservation, the Cleveland Museum of Art steps forward as a leader among very few U.S. museums—the Freer and

Sackler Galleries, Smithsonian Institution; the Metropolitan Museum of Art; and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston—to advance the field of Chinese painting conservation for all future generations.

The gift is made possible from June and Simon Li on behalf of Schwab Charitable.

About the Chinese Paintings Collection at the Cleveland Museum of Art

Chronicling the development of Chinese paintings from the 10th to 21st centuries, the museum's collection is highly regarded in the United States, Europe and Asia for its breadth and quality, as well as for the rarity of many individual works.

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About the Cleveland Museum of Art

The Cleveland Museum of Art is renowned for the quality and breadth of its collection, which includes more than 63,000 artworks and spans 6,000 years of achievement in the arts. The museum is a significant international forum for exhibitions, scholarship and performing arts and is a leader in digital innovations. One of the top comprehensive art museums in the nation, recognized for its award-winning Open Access program and free of charge to all, the Cleveland Museum of Art is located in the University Circle neighborhood.

The museum is supported in part by residents of Cuyahoga County through a public grant from Cuyahoga Arts & Culture and made possible in part by the Ohio Arts Council (OAC), which receives support from the State of Ohio and the National Endowment for the Arts. The OAC is a state agency that funds and supports quality arts experiences to strengthen Ohio communities culturally, educationally and economically. For more information about the museum and its holdings, programs and events, call 888-CMA-0033 or visit cma.org [1].

Press Announcements [2]

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